Protection of Working Women Rights in the Light of the Teachings of Islam

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Abstract:
Men and women are the backbone of human civilization and both play their due roles in the society. In the present era, women are found engaged in every walk of life. Their potential was appreciated in the fields of education, research and medical since long but now they have also got prominence in the fields like army, politics, games, culture, economy, engineering and even avionics. Woman of the modern era is now a good mixture of a conscious wife, affectionate and educated mother and an active worker by increasing her importance and status through achievements in all walks of life. The main purpose of the paper was to identify the rights of women at workplace and to highlight the protection given by Islam for the rights of working women. The study was descriptive in nature. Relevant Hadiths and the examples from the lives of Sahaba regarding the justification of women to work and how their rights to be protected, was discussed. The need of the hour is to create a protected environment for women to work with dignity, without the fear of harassment and abuse which will in turn bring higher productivity and better quality of life at work.
Keywords: working women, teachings of Islam, women rights protection, harassment, Protected environment.

Introduction:

Men and women are the backbone of human civilization and both play their due roles in the society. No doubt that the role of men very important wide and encompassing in the development of society and state. However, if we

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analyze and probe the role of women in this regards, it is not less than that of men. A bigger position of the state's evolution, stability, growth and development is dependent on the role of women. In every developed society, women have significant role. Woman is the focus of family, which makes a society. Hence, development of any society is measured with the role of women in a nation's development and civilization.

Present role of Women and their problems.

In the present era, women are found engaged in every walk of life. Their potential was appreciated in the fields of education, research and medical since long, but now they have also got prominence in the fields like army, politics, games, culture, economy, engineering and even avionics. Now women play important role in the economy side by side with men. Their ratio in education is better as compared to their past. Woman of the modern era is now a good mixture of a conscious wife, affectionate and educated mother and an active worker by increasing her importance and status through achievements in all walks of life.

Today's educated women in view of their nature and interest want to expand their activities beyond the four walls of their homes. There are many causes of such approach by women. There are some women who do not consider their homes sufficient for the satisfaction of their spiritual and intellectual potentials. Such women are of God gifted intelligence and potential which they want to employ it for constructive works and projects of their nation and state. Their goals and objectives of life are of highest standards. They keep themselves engaged in various fields at local and national levels. The spirit of such women is not against the teachings of Islam rather it needs appreciation at society, national and state levels.

Such women are as respectable and honorable as those sitting at their homes as such women who get education and skills to employ it for the society's development and growth deserve more appreciation, support and respect. They not only take active part in the education of women but also have a positive role in the guidance and grooming of men as sons, brothers and grandchildren etc.

Some women opt for services outside their homes due to financial constraints in order to help out their families to meet the day to day expenses. There are many factors which force women to work outside their homes. At times women don't have their male head to earn bread and butter for their family. A widow has to feed her children through working in any capacity. She has poor young girls who opt for jobs to earn money to fulfill dowry demands of their in-laws, besides, reducing financial burden of their families. In some cases, man's income is too meager to cope with their financial requirements. In such a back ground women want to help their male family members so that financial burden is reduced on their shoulders.

Today's women work in different offices, factories, boutiques, other business centers and practicing as doctors and health practitioners in various hospitals and health centers besides, teaching in schools, colleges and

universities. They also work as domestic servants by washing dishes, cleaning houses and washing and ironing clothes etc. Examples of such hardworking women are numerous in the Islamic history.

As far as our society is concerned, we usually find such women being exploited. The harsh reality in such cases is that such injustices with women are usually initiated from our own homes. A married woman's main issue is to have understanding with her husband as well as grooming of her children. Usually working women in our society are facing a chronic problem of their husbands, fathers, brothers, and in some cases, their sons' non-cooperation with them. In case a working woman fails to fulfill some of her domestic responsibilities due to reasonable and plausible excuses, they are confronted with many problems.

A woman who contributes towards the national development in the form of various jobs and assignments performed by her, should be encouraged for their positive role, but unfortunately, they are rather discouraged by men through various tactics like teasing, chasing, harassing besides, considering them inferior, weak, vulnerable and helpless. Such a behavior confronts women with psychological problems which create hurdles for their active role in the society.

Solution of the problems faced by such women may be resolved through Government's policies and various schemes. In the past, Muslim women performed their responsibilities in a good way and assisted their husbands, brothers, sons and fathers in their earnings as well. Today, if a daughter, sister or wife does the same job, the society should assist her in the fulfillment of her responsibilities rather than creating hurdles and problems in her way.

Women Jobs and the Teachings of Islam.

Quran narrates the role and responsibilities of a woman as directed in the light of the thoughts of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). Allah (SWA) says in the Holy Quran:

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى[1]

Remain in your homes, and do not display (your) beauty as it is used to be displayed in the days of earlier ignorance.

In another Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.), Hazrat Aisha R.A. quotes that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

عليكن بالبيت فإنه جهادكن[2]

Just have it at home is their Jihad.

On another occasion he said:

ألا كلكم راع و كلكم مسؤول عن رعيته فالأمير الذي على الناس راع و هو مسؤول عن رعيته و الرجل راع على أهل بيته و هو مسؤول عنهم و المرأة راعية على بيت بعلها و ولده و هي مسؤولة عنهم والعبد راع على مال سيده و هو مسؤول عنه ألا فكلكم راع و كلكم مسؤول عن رعيته [3]

Not to you is a shepherd and all of you are responsible for his flock valomir which the people shepherd and is responsible for his flock and the man is the shepherd of his household and is responsible for them and the woman is the shepherd over the house of her husband and son and are responsible for them and the servant is the shepherd of master's wealth and is responsible for him Each of you is a shepherd and all of you are responsible for his flock

It means that Islam has played the best role for women to be at home to educate and groom her children while making men responsible to fulfill economic and financial requirements of women. However, it does not mean in any way that women should be confined to her home. We can see in Surah Noor and Surah Ahzab which are about the women purdah outside her home.

O prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers that they should draw down their shawls over them. That will make it more likely that they are recognized, hence not teased. And Allah is Most Forgiving, Very-Merciful.[4]

And tell the believing women that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts, and must not expose their adornment, except that which appears thereof, and must wrap their bosoms with their shawls.[5]

Likewise, getting education is the obligation of both men and women. As the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: *Seeking knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim man and woman*[6] Islam didn't keep women confined only to fields of education but she can also work in the fields of agriculture, medical, industries and trade. In short, a woman can step out from her home for the noble purposes. There are examples that women of the old era performed very well in the fields of trade, industry, farming, education and judiciary. Hazrat Sohaib Bin Saad (R.A) quoted a woman who yielded cane in her fields. She used to serve Hazrat Sohail and other Companions of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) with the sweet prepared of cane whenever they used to visit her on Friday[7]. Likewise, Sahabia Qeela asked the Prophet (P.B.U.H) that she was doing sale purchase business.

إني امرأة أبيع وأشتري[8]

She also enquired guidance about other issues. Hazrat Abdullah Bin Masood R.A.'s wife was an artisan. Once she asked the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) that she was an artisan and selling handicrafts through which she meets her financial requirements, as there was no other source of income of her husband and children. فَقَالَتْ : يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ ، إِنِّي امْرَأَةٌ ذَاتُ صَنْعَةٍ أَبِيعُ مِنْهَا، وَلَيْسَ لِي، وَلا لِزَوْجِي، وَلا لِوَلَدِي شَيْءٌ[9] She sought guidance from the Prophet whether she could spend her income on her family? The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) replied that whatever she would spend on them, she would be rewarded by Almighty Allah.

فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صلى الله عليه وسلم: لَكِ فِي ذَلِكَ أَجْرُ مَا أَنْفَقْتِ عَلَيْهِمْ ، فَأَنْفِقِي عَلَيْهِمْ[10]

So, under unfavorable conditions, if a woman works hard in a dignified manner in order to support herself and her family instead of begging and becoming a burden on the society, it would not only be a source of pride for her but the woman will be rewarded on the day of judgment as well.

Women's Social Rights in Islam and Its Protection:

Islam has given women a very high social status with full social security. Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) raised the status of women as mother, sister, wife and daughter and specified special rights for each. In Quran, it is stated that a woman has similar rights as she has her obligations.

وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوف

Women have rights similar to what they owe in recognized manner[11]

These rights should be performed by men and by the fulfillment of these rights, a man can become a true Muslim. Hazrat Muhammad (P.B.U.H) said that:

خيركم خيركم لأهله وأنا خيركم لأهلي

(The best among you is he, who turns best for his family. And I am the best among all of you for my family[12].)

In Surah Al-Nisa it is ordered to behave well with women.

فَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا- وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ

(Live with them in the recognized manner. If you dislike them, then it is quite likely that you dislike something and Allah has placed a lot of good in it.)[13]

In Surah Al-Baqra it is stated that:

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ-

(They are apparel for you, and you are apparel for them.)

Men and women have similar social status in Islam. Genetically and physically men have superiority over women, but in other fields, men and women have almost similar potentials and status. Islam suggests such measures for women's social protection and defense which makes women rights easier and sure. In this regards, the role of the state is very important and effective as compared to family and society. State is like a shelter for both genders. Provision of justice to the public is the basic responsibility of a government, which cleans the society from evils like cruelty, violence crimes and injustices for keeping the public happy.

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ[14]

(We have indeed sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that people may uphold equity).[15]

Islam provides all religious and social rights to women. She can participate in religious sermons, marriages and other social activities.

عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «إِذَا اسْتَأْذَنَكُمْ نِسَاؤُكُمْ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ فَأْذَنُوا لَهُنَّ-

(Ibn Umar said that The Messenger of Allah(peace be upon him) said if your women seek permission to visit Mosque, you should permit them)-[16]

Women can participate in all religious ceremonies and worships and this is the responsibility of government to make specific arrangements in the Mosques where women may freely participate in prayers. Similarly, the government is also responsible to protect women's religious and social rights.

In Islam's social system, the basic feature is that it has made men responsible for state and society's responsibilities while relieving women from the economic, political and defense responsibilities and advised them to stay firm at the domestic front. The men have been made bound to look after financial requirements of women. Women have been given shares in the property of father, brother, son and husband etc. The husband was made bound to pay her "***dower***"[17]. All these rights make women financially stronger wherein neither father can intervene nor her husband. Similarly, if she earns something through hard work, it is her sole ownership and if she spends anything out of such income at her free will, it is "***Sadqa***" on her behalf which will be rewarded hereafter by Allah Almighty.[18]

Islam has made a woman owner and administrator of her house and she should give preference to her home on her outer activities. She should not destroy her family and house. After fulfillment of her domestic responsibilities, she can participate in life's various fields as per her passion, expertise and aptitude.

In Islam, women are not barred in any way from earning livelihood. However, there are certain conditions which should be fulfilled by all Muslim women in any way: -

a. Women job should not affect her domestic responsibilities like grooming of her children. Further, her children should not be deprived of her natural love being her basic responsibility.
b. Job or employment should be such that it does not affect women's dignity, respect and status negatively.
c. Women should observe Hijab and simplicity while going out for their jobs whereas usually women do not care in this regard, as some women do not observe Hijab while going outside their homes for jobs.
d. Women should avoid as much as possible working in mixed men-women organizations and departments. Preferably, the job should be in women institutions.

e. For joining jobs, women should have the permission and approval of their father, husband or brother so that the family system remains intact and stable.

Suggestions:

In this regards, some suggestions are as follow:

f. There should be separate institutions and departments for women so that they are not mixed up with men and are able to observe Purdah.

g. Separate transport should be arranged by various government departments like universities and hospitals for women so that they are free from the tension of non-availability of decent transport where women purdah might be affected.

h. Separate hospitals and health care units should be established for women.

i. Women doing government jobs should be posted closer to their homes and should not be compelled to roam about for her posting closer to her home address.

j. There should be clear legislation for the protection of women and their sanctity whereby if somebody violates or tries to violate that, he may be given exemplary punishment.

k. Official accommodations should be provided to women employees on priority.

l. Sufficient government accommodations should be constructed in all relevant departments to cater for the women accommodation problems.

m. Harassment of women should be severely discouraged by punishing those who harass women and such cases should not be given media coverage and access.

n. Media should be restricted from defaming women employees.

o. There should be no male employees as far as possible in women specific departments, hospitals, schools, colleges and universities.

p. Women Hijab should be encouraged through media and legislation.

Conclusion:

In a nutshell it may be said that Islam does emphasize on women to give attention to her home by focusing on the grooming of her children and their education but it in no case bars women from doing jobs and employments outside her home rather it encourages her in this regard. In this regard the role of men, society and state is very important for the protection of women and their rights in the society.

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